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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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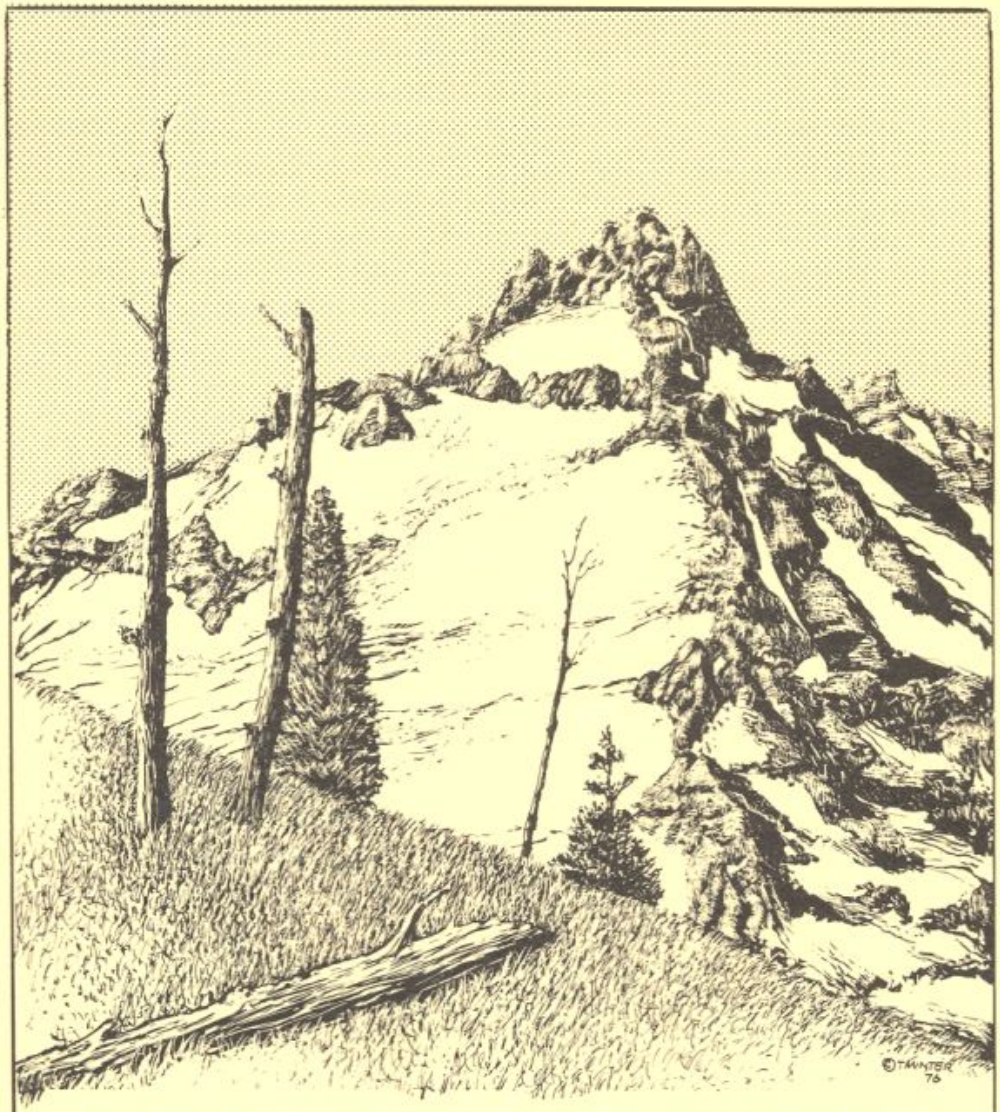

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting thou art God. —*Psalms 90: 1-2*

Volume 18, No. 9 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November 1976**

The Word Abused . . .

JOINING THE CHURCH

If there is a verbal anathema that is well nigh universal among our own Church of Christ folk, this would be it. *Join* the church? How sectarian can one get! Everyone who knows anything about the Bible knows that you don't join the church, but that the Lord adds you to the church, for that is the way Acts 2:47 reads: "The Lord added to the church day by day those that were being saved." So, you might "become a member" or "obey the gospel" or "be added by the Lord," though that term added is not often employed in everyday lingo, but you *never* talk about "joining the church."

And our folk have made the point stick. They realize, like their preachers tell them, that they didn't join anything. but that they were added to the church, and so you almost never hear any of our people commit such a *faux pas* as "I joined the Church of Christ back in my teens." If one talks in any such manner it only shows that he is not yet well grounded.

Do the scriptures warrant any such notion as this? It doesn't hurt to take a look, even if we end up shooting down a sacred cow. Sacred cows never give milk anyhow. They usually just stand around and bellow, calling attention to themselves, and never do any real good. We are usually freer, happier, and more natural when the sacred cows take off for the woods where they belong. This is no big deal, whether one dares to say *join* or not, but I seek to liberate people who have this vocabulary hangup and have to watch their words lest they commit some unpardonable sin. Maybe it is only a sacred *call* that we are after, but I'm for chunking rocks at him just the same. Here goes.

It is prophesied in the Old Testament that those who turned to the Lord on Pentecost would indeed join the church: "Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people" (Zech. 2:11). It is generally agreed that this refers to Pentecost in Acts 2. The prophet said that they would "join themselves to the Lord," and to join the Lord is to join his Body or his church.

There is an interesting difference between *join* and *added to.* The first implies human initiative, a step one can take toward some intended goal. The word is used this way several times in scripture. Philip *joins* himself to the chariot on Acts 8:29, the prodigal son *joins* himself to a citizen in a far country (Luke 15:15). And yet the word sometimes suggests divine initiative, with the Lord joining things or people together. Jesus warns

against tampering with what God has joined together" in Mt. 19:6, and Paul speaks of the Body being "joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied" (Eph. 4:16). And sometimes, as in Eph. 5:31 where a man is to be "joined to his wife," it looks as if the joining calls for both human and divine action.

The term *added to* is divine action only and never human. No man can add anyone to God's number, not even himself. Man may well "join the church"— except it is *church* that is really not a good scriptural term (it should be *assembly* or *community)*— in that he obeys the gospel. He does what the Lord requires, which is all the power he has. By God's grace he is added to or made a part of (or joined to) the Body of Christ.

So *join* may be used of human or divine action or both, while added to is divine action only. I believe that will hold up. These two terms follow each other in Acts 5:13-14. Verse 13 says, "None of the rest dared join them," referring to the reluctance of the unbelievers to cast their lot with the community of Jewish believers. Here is a clear-cut instance of *join* being used in referring to "becoming a member" of the church, for it is in effect saying: *None of the unbelievers would dare to join the church.* If the doctor who wrote those words had been schooled in our Christian colleges or Bible schools, he would not have used the word *join* like that!

Verse 14 shows the power that the gospel finally had, despite the reluctance: "More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Surely only God did the adding. But the people who believed did the joining!

Joining can be thought of as obeying. Joining oneself to the disciples, an expression found in Acts 9:26, is to become like the disciples. To be "joined unto the Lord," as in 1 Cor. 6:1 7 is to obey the Lord and to become like him. Just as I Cor. 6:16, "he who joins himself to a prostitute," has similar implications. *Joining* and *obeying* are used together in Acts 5:36, which well illustrates our whole point. "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four thousand joined themselves: who was slain, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought." They *joined* Theudas; they *obeyed* Theudas.

Would it not therefore follow that those of us who obey Jesus join Jesus, and vice versa? *Join the church* is therefore as meaningful as *become a member of the church.* So go ahead and say it, bracing yourself if you must: "I joined the church when I was 15 years old." Say it, brother, say it, and declare yourself a free man! Let them say what they will, one can "join the Lord's church," and we have proved it. He can only hope that the Lord

will add him to that number that make up "the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven." It may well be true that many who have *joined* have never really been *added,* but that can only mean that they didn't join the right thing, or better still, the right *Person*.

I was motivated to prepare this piece by a booklet issued by Dan Ottinger (Box 40662, Nashville 37201) entitled *Joining the Church,* which is a chapter of his forthcoming book, *Creeds Under Fire.* In the booklet he tells the story, reproducing the letters, of how a prominent Church of Christ editor, now deceased, refused to publish his letter challenging this bit about "You can't join the Lord's church," once the editor had again repeated this old cliche'. The editor promised to publish the letter, which set forth the position I have stated herein, but then backed down. Brother Ottinger is convinced that the editor could not bear to have one of our sacred cows butchered right there in the columns of his own paper. So he chose to back down on his word rather than boot out the old cow! Or is it only a calf? If you would like a copy of the booklet, and thereby find out who the editor was!), send 75 cents to the brother at the address given. Things are changing, you know! —*The Editor*

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LOOKING IN ON "THE DEBATE OF THE CENTURY"

You might have supposed that on Sept. 23 when you were viewing the Ford-Carter debate that you were witnessing what might be called "the debate of the century." If not that one, them perhaps the Kennedy-Nixon exchange in 1960 would warrant such an accolade. But not so. On that very night, Sept. 23, a debate was taking place right here in my hometown of Denton, Texas that was persistently advertised far and wide as "the debate of the century."

My brethren are given to superlatives, just why I am not sure. Recently a soul-winning workshop conducted by a Church of Christ in one of our area cities was hailed as "the most significant event in the history of the modern church."

The participants were Antony Flew, a philosophy professor from Reading, England, and Thomas Warren, a philosophy professor from Memphis, Tn. The issue was the existence of God, with the British prof contending that "I know that God does not exist," while Prof. Warren affirmed, "I know that God does exist." It was held in the new coliseum of North Texas State University and attracted an average of about 4,000 to 5,000 people for each of the four evenings, many of whom came from afar. Buses from schools

of preaching and from such colleges as Freed-Hardeman and Ohio Valley brought students by the scores. They heard the debate at night and then took courses on it during the day, with teachers being imported for that purpose. There was also "preaching" all afternoon at the University Church of Christ, who sponsored and financed the whole affair, with some help from other congregations.

The congregation even sponsored Tony Flew, the atheist, which must be a first in the history of our debates. I know of no other instance where our folk sponsored and financed *both* sides of a public discussion. And we've debated atheists before. When W. L. Oliphant, for instance, debated a Mr. Smith on the existence of God, Mr. Smith was endorsed by the American Association of Atheism, of which he was the president. But Prof. Flew was endorsed by no one, except the University Church of Christ, and it was that congregation that paid for his round-trip flight from London and provided him with a rather liberal expense account. If some of the rest of us had spent "the Lord's money" like that, we'd be accused of "having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" or of bidding God's speed to a false teacher. When our folk don't want to debate someone, they'll protest that they should not provide an audience for a false teacher to air his views, and that a dissenter should get his own crowd. Well, this time we picked up the tab for an atheist's junket abroad, provided him with an audience (very few, if any, of his folk were in attendance), and allowed him to say what he pleased. It just shows that if we want to do something, for whatever reason, we can find a rationale.

I am flattered that people ask me what I thought of the debate, as if it really mattered. It may rather be my penalty for living in Denton. I do not hesitate to say that I do not agree with either side of the proposition. No one can prove that God does not exist, and no one realizes that more than Tony Flew. That is why he had to spend time analyzing the language he was using. He knows God does not exist, he explained, like he knows fairies do not exist. Strictly speaking, he doesn't even *know* that fairies do not exist, for there just might possibly be one somewhere, depending, of course, on what that word is made to mean. He only means that the idea of God's existence is contrary to both his experience and his reason, as he sees it.

But neither would I affirm that I know God does exist. The attempt to prove such is to make religion a matter of science rather than faith. The scriptures make it clear that it is a matter of faith: "Those that come to God must *believe* that he is . . ." I could say, "I believe that God exists, and here are my reasons why." But even so one never *proves* God's existence. The thesis that *God* is is an axiom that one accepts as true or as untrue. It is neither provable or disprovable. God gives us evidence of His existence, and so we have

grounds for our faith. That evidence may appear to us to be so overwhelming that disbelief itself becomes a mystery, but still it is a matter of faith rather than knowledge. If we could *prove* it, like we can prove oil to be lighter than water, then there would be no such thing as disbelief. But that is the point of religion, that it be grounded in faith, thus touching the heart more than the head. Religion is a love story, not an intellectual or philosophical system.

I was able to hear only half of the debate, so I am hardly in a position to evaluate it — even if my evaluation would be worth anything, —which it wouldn't. But I heard enough to be left uneasy with brother Warren's approach. He attempted to prove by rationalistic arguments that God exists.

He said as much to Flew. After portraying an involved logical argument on a chart, he said something like, "I have proved by this deductivc argument that God does exist." This is a risky position to take. If the issue is that clear-cut, why is unbelief so persistent? He proved no such thing. All such arguments begin with premises that are assumed to be true, that an atheist only needs to call in question. Perhaps this is why the Bible makes no attempt to prove God's existence. From first to last His existence is taken for granted (or treated as an axiom) and postulated on the grounds of faith rather than knowledge.

Brother Warren made it appear that faith (which really becomes knowledge!) has no particular problems. The theist has all the answers. One can be dogmatic and arbitrary about it, and if the atheist doesn't come to see it like we do, then there has to be something wrong with him. There is no other ground, no reason for doubt or difficulty.

As one of the local philosophy teachers who volunteered to help entertain the visiting British scholar, I had occasion to explain to him my own approach to a theistic faith, which is based on God's revelation in nature, in scripture, and in Jesus. I believe because of Jesus! I do not believe God's existence can be proved by the usual classical arguments, whether the cosmological or teleological, or what have you. These might confirm one's faith, but they prove nothing. They may be *reasons* for believing, but not proof. Furthermore, I cannot be a dogmatic theist, for I recognize that however deep faith grows it may still have intellectual problems. I fear that a faith that becomes dogmatic and rash, assuming that it has no problems, is all too superficial. With the man in Mk 9:24 we can all say at one time or another, "I believe, help my unbelief." We often have to say, in the face of so much human suffering in a world ruled over by a benevolent God, *I don't know, I don't understand, but still I trust Him.*

The atheist must admit that he, too, has some serious problems. It is only in this context of mutually accepted difficulties that any ground can be gained with atheists. Such rashness that ties evolution inseparably to atheism, which brother Warren also did, only drives the wedge deeper and leaves atheists supposing that we are ignoramuses, in spite of our claims to be otherwise. After all, there are many theists, including some of our own Church of Christ people, who accept the evolutionary theory. But to Tom Warren it all falls or stands together. There are really no problems left, once you carefully scrutinize his charts and accept his arguments. Chart 47-C proves it, so what's your problem!

I was listening in when one of our young Ph.D.'s, or maybe a candidate for the degree, said that Tom Warren would come nearer making an atheist of him than Antony Flew would. I might not put it that way, but there is cause for such an evaluation. To trust in the God of the Lord Jesus Christ must one become a dogmatist? And, after all, Flew was being asked to believe in a God whose church on earth is really a Tennessee-Texas sect that not only condemns all other believers besides itself, but even condemns those within its own party that veer from the party line.

As I listened to the debate, my mind wandered for a moment. It was the judgment scene. Brother Warren could at last make his point, once and for all:

Warren: See there, Dr. Flew, God does exist, just as I told you.
Flew: Indeed he does, old chap, but he is not quite the God that you were asking me to accept, is he now?

This was, indeed, a case of rightwing Church of Christism come to town. I began to get calls from folk far and wide, despite their misgivings about me. J. D. Bales, who moderated for Tom Warren, and I had lunch together. J. D. knows that I both love and like him, and I think he does me, so we get along as believers should, enjoying a leisurely lunch together. But he had to assure me that lunching with me does not mean that he agrees with me on everything! So, I pass that along to my readers as I relate the incident, for his protection. I presume that he has to make that speech to everyone with whom he dines, or else concede at least to himself that he is in perfect accord with whomever it is. Or is it for some reason different in my case?

I was at the meetinghouse near the close of a day session to greet an old college roommate that had called. They were all there, and I fear my presence created an issue far more emotionally charged than was the debate of the century. Ira Rice, Jr. wanted to know about my association with Flew, firsthand before he writes me up, I took it. Questions

from others were calculated to identify me with Flew. One fellow laid it out in logical form, influenced perhaps by Warren's logic, to the effect that if I "compromised the truth" with the Christian Church then I'd compromise the truth about God's existence.

One brother from Tennessee considered it proper to get up before the audience, following the sermons, and brand me as a false teacher. There were several rousing Amens. I got a dim impression of not being exactly loved and appreciated! But I was pleased that I could love them still and pray for them then and there, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And, bless them, they really don't. I love Jesus and I cherish his word. I stand for what the universal church has believed and died for from the days of Paul and Peter to the time of Luther and Campbell. I am no doubt mistaken about some things, but I am not a false teacher, nor would I label them as such. But they were behaving maliciously toward their brother, and it was all so unnecessary.

The best I could determine was that I am a false teacher because I "fellowship the Christian Church," believe there are Christians among the sects, and accept Baptists as brothers without their being re-immersed for the remission of sins. I explained to the brother who had publicly charged me that I do not fellowship the Christian Church anymore than I fellowship the Church of Christ, that fellowship is a relationship that we have with Jesus, and all who are "in Christ" are in that fellowship.

Since Alexander Campbell had been referred to honorifically only a few minutes before I had been castigated, I thought it appropriate to point out to the brother, with a crowd gathered about us, that every charge he made against me could also be made against Campbell. Campbell believed there were Christians in the sects, including the Baptists that he accepted as brothers without re-immersion. He himself was immersed without realizing it was for the remission of sins, and when he made the connection a decade or so later, he was not baptized again "for the remission of sins." So, I pressed the brother for an answer, *Was Alexander Campbell a false teacher?* He positively refused to answer. One can sometimes draw applause, before certain audiences, for calling Leroy Garrett a false teacher, but it doesn't sound quite right to say the same thing about Alexander Campbell, even when the facts are parallel.

Still another brother in his discourse accused me of dividing that congregation, the one where they were gathered, the one promoting the debate. There was, indeed, a split in that church, with some 150 people walking out and starting over, and this included two of the preachers, elders and many business and professional people — the very heart of the congregation. And Leroy Garrett did it! They impute to me power and influence that I

neither have nor want. It is more of their logic. After all, I live in Denton, so . . . And why should the leadership admit the real reason to be their own narrow sectarianism when they can blame it on someone else? The truth is that I had no more to do with that congregation dividing than Gerald Ford or Jimmy Carter. The ones that left were driven away by an unreasonable, unloving, and uncooperative attitude on the part of the leadership. Hearing that I had had considerable contact with brethren with their problem, I was asked to meet with a dozen or so of them one evening. Upon hearing their story I advised them to stay with the congregation, to keep loving and to keep working for a peaceful solution. They did remain until the next preacher came. Finally they decided the situation was hopeless and left. I laid these facts before the brother who had falsely charged me, in the event he would like to make the correction — "for your sake more than mine." But that was the way he had heard it and he wasn't going to take it back. I told him that the elders of the new congregation had stated publicly that I had nothing to do with their departure. Still it did not matter. Like Pilate, what he had said he had said. Besides, all these years I had divided so many churches that the charge is so generally true that it could fairly be made in this case. I asked him to name a church I had divided. "This one!" was his answer.

Finally I found my old college friend, an obscure preacher who loves the Lord and serves him simply and devotedly, and a brother who under other circumstances would have treated me differently. After all, he had called in hopes that we might see each other. But he, too, belongs to the party (still I love him!) and in that tense situation he, too, had to lecture me rather than to recall old times. He seemed to agonize over it, concerned as he was for my soul. So I sat down in one of the pews, suggesting that he talk about whatever was on his mind. It was not the way I was treating Ouida or that I was not paying my debts, or that I had denied my Lord or gone off after the likes of Rev. Moon. From his troubled countenance came this: "Leroy, you know that instrumental music will send a church to hell!" It was a sad situation, but I am not one to give up. Even in *that* audience there were surely a few who will pause to ask themselves, *Is this the kind of religion I want to live and die by?*

As for my old friend (he and I as boys used to stand on bales of hay to preach!) I thought of Thomas Campbell's evaluation of the many evils caused by the party spirit: It is anti-Christian, anti-scriptural, and anti-natural. *Anti-natural*, how discerning that is. Down deep inside his heart a brother wants to reach out and embrace, to accept, to love and be free, but the party says no. *He does not belong to us; indeed, he is opposed to us, so you must reject him.* Man wants to grow and expand his mind, to read, to think, to question, to move in larger circles — all this is *natural* — but the party spirit forbids it. Maybe that is why Campbell said he was sick and tired of the whole sectarian mess!

All this set me to thinking: is this the religion that we would have Tony Flew to take back to England with him? Is this the God that we would hold up before him?

While in Denton our British friend attended the Unitarian Church. There was an in-depth discussion on the plight of the aged. Flew, who has long been concerned over the predicament of the aged around the world, observed that in our mobile culture it must be traumatic for a person to have to sit in a chair and never again drive a car. On the day that I volunteered to take him around, I arranged for him to see our underground complex that houses the Civil Defense Agency, where the president might come to run the country in case of nuclear attack. Flew revealed himself to be a man aware of and concerned about global problems, and he named the containment of Communistic aggression as the world's most serious problem today. Population and energy are the next most serious. He is a free and jovial man, laughs at his own mistakes, often refers to his little girl and his father who was a Methodist minister (Warren in the debate: "You can't help but like the man.") He even attended a rodeo and would have been pleased for the debate to have been shorter so that he could visit our Big Thicket and delve into Texas history.

If we converted him and sent him back to England, he would have to start his own little sect, rejecting even other Restoration churches. His concerns would shrivel in size from the plight of the aged to instrumental music or what to do about Norvel Young and Pepperdine, or "liberalism." He probably would lose communication with his daughter and would be embarrassed to refer to his father. He would have to withdraw into a smaller world and be content with narrower interests. He could not associate with folk like you and me. In a debate situation he would have to wind himself tight and dogmatize and be right about everything, even to the point of isolating himself so that he could be sure to "defend the truth" (Warren and the inner-circle were in four motel rooms, with "Do not disturb" orders left with the desk; I could not even get a call through to J. D. Bales). He might even lose his interest in rodeos!

Is a bad religion better or worse than no religion at all? For such unbelievers to come to know the Jesus who spoke forgivingly to the sinful women brought to him and who associated with publicans and harlots, that would be something else. I'll buy that. But that would also be a big change for a lot of the rest of us.

Well, of course Tom Warren won the debate (who else!), but Tony Flew had more fun.
—*the Editor*

Man proposes, but God disposes. -*Thomas a' Kempis*

No wall means as much to me as a brother. Walls are products of men; my brethren are a creation of God. —Carl Ketcherside, *Paths of Peace, p. 4*

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Pilgrimage of Joy . . .

MY DAYS AS A BOY PREACHER

By W. Carl Ketcherside

My surrender to the claims of Jesus over my life launched me almost at once into a round of new experiences. On the Sunday following my baptism I publicly read the scripture lesson which was a regular feature of our assembly. A week later I led in public prayer. The autumn "protracted meeting" was conducted by J.C. Bunn, an esteemed evangelist who was born in our general region and who was in demand among the congregations. On the final night of his series he announced that I would speak one month from that night. Apparently he had consulted with the elders but the announcement came as a complete surprise to me.

By this time I had graduated from the rural school and was attending classes in town, a distance of some three miles. I was barely twelve years of age. Since I knew of no effective way of getting out of speaking I decided to use the theme "Counting the Cost" and after outlining what I wanted to say I began rehearsing on my walk through the woods and fields each morning and evening as I went to school and returned home. Interest began to grow as word was noised abroad and on the Sunday evening I was to speak the house was completely crowded out and many had to remain outside and listen through the open windows.

When I ascended the platform, dressed in knee trousers, I was so short my head could hardly be seen above the reading stand by the seated audience. One rural wag told me later the only way he knew I was back there was by seeing my hair moving back and forth above the stand. He said it was standing on end. I was afraid of but one thing, that I might run out of material and have to dismiss the audience prematurely. There was no danger! I

spoke almost an hour, and later when one farmer was asked what he thought about my preaching he said, “It is the most exhausting experience I have ever had. You can’t sleep worth shucks while he is talking and you don’t get home in time to catch up on it before morning.”

As soon as I had finished, an elder from the Green Pond congregation came up and asked me if I would speak there the following Sunday, and another from Bee Creek arranged for me to speak there two weeks from that date. Soon I was busy every Sunday of each month, and people came from far and near to see a “boy preacher” with the same curiosity which would have attracted them to a carnival sideshow to see a two-headed calf.

One week my father was conducting a series of meetings in a rural location far out in the bottom area of the snake-infested region close to the Mississippi River. Word was conveyed that the humble farm-folk wanted to close with a basket dinner followed with an afternoon meeting with both my father and myself as speakers. It was the first time my father had heard me make a public address and it was a blessing indeed for me to be thus associated with him, knowing as I did the zeal he had for Christ and the sacrifices he had made for the cause which he loved more than life.

One afternoon when I arrived home from school, I found my mother sitting on the front porch visiting with Sister Schlieper, whose husband was an elder of the congregation at Bee Creek. Anna Schlieper was a remarkable person. Her father, Klaus Martens, a carpenter in Germany, brought his family to America when Anna was five years of age. The emigrants settled in a region known as Mozier Hollow, in Illinois. Nominally members of the Lutheran Church in Germany, they did not actively identify with any religious group in the new world. In the little colony of people whose roots still reached back to “The Fatherland” Anna married Edward Schlieper and they began their home under extremely modest circumstances.

“Uncle Tom” Roady, a plain country-type preacher came into “the Hollow” to conduct a series of meetings, and because every such gathering was a social event, the Schliepers went. Although the preacher was far from being a “ball of fire” the simple message made an impression upon the shrewd mind of Anna Schlieper and she and her husband were immersed in the nearby stream. The wife immediately began to plunge into the revelation of God, and although her husband was not as interested as herself, she bombarded him with her findings until he became an apt student of the Word. By the time we moved to

Illinois the entire Schlieper family was in the faith and pillars in both the community and the little congregation which met in a building occupying a plot of ground carved out of their farm.

I shall always believe it was an act of divine providence which caused us to move to that region of Illinois. No one else on earth was as well adapted to reach my mother as Anna Schlieper. Two days after the latter had read to her from the German Translation of Martin Luther, I was summoned to the classroom of the high school principal, G.B. Garrison, who informed me that my mother was to be baptized at two o'clock that afternoon and I was free to attend if I wished. I walked the more than two miles out the railroad track to the bridge over the creek and turned up the country road to the "baptizing hole." I was alternately weeping and praying as I went. In my childish inexperience I had no vocabulary with which to express my profound gratitude unto God. I still do not.

After my mother had been immersed, and we returned home so she could change from her wet garments, I wanted to tell her how much I rejoiced inwardly, but all I could get out was a stammering "Mom, I'm glad!" Both of us started crying and continued until it seemed silly to go on, and then we started laughing, almost hysterically. After that we both understood and did not need to talk about it any more. Our family was one in Christ Jesus. When my grandfather heard about it, he revised his will without my mother's knowledge. He never wrote to us again and when his will was read after his death, my mother's name was not even mentioned. She had been a favorite child, loving and obedient, but once she obeyed the call of Jesus it was as if she had never been born. The sectarian spirit crushed out parental affection as it destroys all love and makes those who would kill you think they are doing God service.

Occasionally I am asked by those who have created institutional hand maidens to suckle, rear and train the children of God, how we made out before men created these special agencies and auxiliary bodies as functional nursemaids, The answer is simple. Each congregation was regarded as a school of Christ and a college of the Bible. All of the soldiers were given the same identical training. All were taught the use of the various portions of the sword. No one was sent as a recruit to an "officer's training school" to come back and wield the weapon and wear the shield for the whole company. Benjamin Franklin had taught the brethren to "teach the whole truth to the whole church and those with leadership ability will rise to the top as cream rises on the milk."

Intensive studies of the Bible were conducted in many congregations during the winter. Brethren within driving distance attended with eagerness. Classes were held morning, afternoon and night. Training was afforded boys and young men in the public presentation of the Word. Stiff tests were given to see if the message was getting through. These studies often lasted for weeks and provided a welcome respite in long winter months. Brethren who were apt to teach were in constant demand.

In this number was A.M. Morris, whose studies at Hale, Missouri, and Winfield, Kansas, are still mentioned by old-timers, Brother M orris wrote the books *Prophecies Unveiled* and *Reason and Revelation.* They were widely read in all religious circles. Once when he was on a train, William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate for president came through the coaches meeting and shaking hands with the passengers. When he learned the identity of Morris he publicly introduced him as the man whose books had taught him more about the Bible than any other volumes he had ever read. He urged the passengers to secure a copy of *Reason and Revelation* and read about it.

Daniel Sommer, J. C. Bunn, Stephen and Silas Settle, and D. Austen Sommer were all recognized as teachers. The latter, like his father, produced a number of books, among them one called “How to Read the Bible for Pleasure and Profit.” It was cleverly done and he used this as a guide in his four-week study which I attended at night the winter after I was baptized. He was not as adept in teaching as some of the others, but one does not criticize the serving when he is starving for the food.

I learned a great deal, as a mere lad, sitting with older farm-folk who marked and underlined the Bibles so they could recall the things they had learned. They were often slow readers and had to point to each word in turn, Sometimes they mistook the meaning of a passage as did the dear old sister who was reading the passage which declares that “Jacob stole away from Laban unawares,” and read it with emphasis, “And Jacob stole away from Laban in his underwear.” But I doubt there has ever been a substitute quite as effective as the training of the whole community of saints to function by the use of every gift. As Peter put it, “Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

As the months went by I was called upon to go farther and farther from home to speak at congregations, some of which I had scarcely heard about. Each Saturday I would walk to town and board the train for some destination where I was scheduled to address the brethren on Saturday night and Sunday morning, returning home again on Sunday evening. Frequently, after taking my ticket, a conductor would come back and question me

to see if I was running away from home. On occasion a brother would come to meet me at the railway station and return home without me, telling his wife that no one got off the train but a little boy and he did not see “hide or hair” of anyone who even looked like a preacher.

Our uncle, L. E. Ketcherside, who was living in Centralia, Missouri arranged for me to come and speak there each night during the Christmas vacation. I stayed in his home and we talked long and often about the cause we loved. He was a master at relating his experiences and also at personal work. We developed a closeness which was never strained through the years. Several decades later he died of a massive brain hemorrhage as he was going from door to door distributing faithbuilding material he had printed on his trusty mimeograph the day before. As I spoke words of tribute in his honor at the funeral service my mind drifted back to the wintry nights when the two of us walked through the crunching snow at Centralia.

I recalled that the speaker’s stand was so high that I had to stand on a box to see the audience. There were not more than thirty persons present but it was a great meeting because I was with those whom I loved.

If all the world were just, there would be no need for valor. —*Plutarch*

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Bicentennial Notes on Restoration History . . .

THE TENNESSEE - TEXAS FEUD

(Or, The Sin that Divided a Movement)

Even today there remain traces of the feud that reaches back to the 1880’s. The Tennessee and Texas Churches of Christ have always had something less than strong ties. They have been inclined to favor their own leaders, publications and colleges, and they have had their pet loyalties in terms of doctrine and practice. Even in the 1970’s the distance between Nashville and Abilene is further than between Tennessee and California. It is partly a matter of history.

The story is important to our survey because it helps us to see how division finally came to "the Movement that cannot divide," as Moses Lard put it, and it may assist us in seeing how we still have hanging over us that same dark cloud that both blinds us and hides us in reference to the larger Christian world. This is the sin of exclusivism. In this and the last installment of this series we shall be showing that this was the sin that divided our people, and we propose to explain how it came about.

It is evident that our pioneers were not exclusivists. From the very beginning they sought to work with existing denominational structures. The first Campbell congregation, called Brush Run, applied first for affiliation with a Presbyterian presbytery. Denied this, they became part of a Baptist association of churches. The second Campbell congregation at Wellsburg, Virginia, which grew out of Brush Run, was a part of the Mahoning Baptist Association, and it was in such an association that the Campbell effort blossomed into a Movement. It was never their will to *leave* anything, but to work for reform from within. Circumstances being against them, or perhaps for them, they soon found themselves on the outside, "withdrawn from," as it were, and a "denomination" of their own. This brings us to around 1830. From this time on, through the Civil War, our people were never exclusivists, except for an occasional radical. They were Christians only, they insisted, but not the only Christians. They did not presume that they were right and everyone else wrong, and they certainly did not believe that they alone were the one true church. When that viewpoint finally did emerge, it caused division, as we shall see.

An exclusivist could never write as Campbell did, in response to a criticism he received for joining forces with Barton Stone: "If, however, my uniting with anyone sect would shut me out from all others which hold the Christian institutions ever so imperfectly, I would rather choose to stand aloof from that sect than from all others." (MH, 1831, 558)

The Movement was well crystallized and Campbell at 50 was no longer a young man when he wrote in response to the question of whether there be Christians among the sects: "If there be no Christians in the Protestant sects, there are certainly none among the Romanists, none among the Jews, Turks, Pagans; and therefore no Christians in the world except ourselves. Therefore, for many centuries there has been no church of Christ, no Christians in the world, and the promises concerning the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah have failed, and the gates of hell have prevailed against his church! This cannot be; and therefore there are Christians among the sects." (MH, 1837, 411)

This means that our pioneers had no illusions about restoring the primitive church, as if it did not exist. They made no such claim. They rather believed that the church has always been, just as Jesus said it would, but that it had its defects and was in need of reformation. They thus sought to restore *to* the church things that were lacking.

A different spirit has emerged in recent generations. We are now told that we are *the* church to the exclusion of all others. We are the only Christians. We have restored the true church. With that spirit has come a dozen or more divisions, each claiming to be the true Body of Christ. The spirit of exclusivism is the spirit of sectarianism that has divided and subdivided us. The Texas-Tennessee feud is not *the* cause of this, but a suitable illustration of what happened and why.

As early as the mid-1830's, while still but a fledgling Movement, the Disciples were plagued with the re-baptism issue, that is, the practice (which some came to insist upon) of re-immersing those who were not knowingly and purposely baptized for the remission of sins. The issue seethed below surface through two generations. So long as Campbell lived its advocates had little chance of any substantial success, for he strongly opposed the practice, insisting that the only valid ground for re-immersing anyone would be if the person were void of faith when he was first baptized. Once Campbell was dead (1866) the insidious forces of exclusivism could more easily leaven the Movement, and this was the issue behind the Texas-Tennessee feud.

The demand for re-immersion first appeared in 1834 in the pages of the *Apostolic Advocate*, edited by Dr. John Thomas in Philadelphia. He contended that both the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must understand that immersion is unto the remission of sins, otherwise the act is invalid. Campbell not only opposed Dr. Thomas on this issue in his writings, but went to the doctor's church for a public confrontation. In time Thomas left the Movement and founded the sect known as Christadelphians. The re-baptism heresy was kept at bay as long as Campbell lived, but, being a form of exclusivism, it and other such forms were destined to eventual victory, thus dividing the Movement.

Exclusivism expressed itself in other ways. Some insisted that our people were the only true Christians, so any cooperation with "the denominations" would be sinful. The Lord's Supper, whether open to all believers or only to the properly baptized, became an issue. The larger question of whether there are Christians among the sects would not go away, even though Campbell ran 23 articles on the subject in 1839 alone. Soon societies and instrumental music were also issues. The problem was not that there were differences, for the Movement had always had such differences, but that an exclusivistic spirit was

finding expression. The view that the Disciples had restored the true church was solidifying, and this meant that all others must conform to "the pattern" or be considered unsaved. Some reformers were ready to "withdraw from" other reformers and no longer recognize them as brothers because of this or that "innovation." This is the story we are telling.

When a story gets big we would expect it to come out of Texas. Our first congregation dates back to 1836 (Clarksville, Texas), the same year that Texas became a republic. As the frontier moved westward, more and more Disciples made their way to Texas. This was especially the case following the Civil War, with so much of the South devastated. Just before the war we had something like 200 small congregations. with a membership of about 6,000. Two decades or so following the war we had some 600 congregations and 34,000 members. Today one-third of the members of Churches of Christ are in Texas, numbering around 450,000 in 2700 churches. The very first meetinghouse erected in Dallas was a Christian Church (1867), an historical marker now marks the spot, only a few squares from the Kennedy assassination spot. That congregation eventually divided in 1877 over the organ (the *pro* organ folk walking out this time!), but they both continued to call themselves Christian Church and they both called their "Pastor" *Reverend!*

So, by the 1880's Texas was vying with Tennessee for southern leadership of Christian Churches - Churches of Christ, which was mostly conservative when compared to the likes of Isaac Errett and the *Christian Standard* in the North. At this time the undisputed leader in the South was David Lipscomb and the *Gospel Advocate* in Nashville. In regard to "the issues," Lipscomb was a moderate. For 20 years or so he ignored the organ as a kind of non-issue, considering it a matter of little importance as compared to the war resolutions issued by our missionary society in the North. The issue of helping the South's poverty-stricken saints was more vital to him than whether societies are right or wrong. Despite pressures applied to him by hard-liners, he kept issues like the organ a matter of opinion and would not make them a matter of fellowship. He himself visited with "organ churches," and he refused to draw a line between "pro-organ preachers" and "anti-organ preachers." as some leaders in the South (and the North!) had begun to do. He finally yielded this moderate position and became an exclusivist, but we will tell that part of the story in our next.

As for the re-immersion issue, Lipscomb always remained a staunch Campbellite, insisting adamantly that the only condition for baptism is faith in Jesus. So, in keeping with the Movement's history, he not only opposed the re-baptizing of Baptists, but considered them to be brothers in Christ. He even wrote editorials on the possibility of

uniting with the Baptists. And yet he was a strong immersionist, contending that one cannot be sure of his salvation until he is immersed. It was the issue of open membership, by the way, that jarred him from his moderate position and turned him into an exclusivist. But this came later. In the meantime Lipscomb was to have a big problem down in Texas.

In 1884 a new paper began in Austin called the *Firm Foundation,* edited by one Austin McGary, a former sheriff turned evangelist, who was a hard-liner from the word go. The paper made it clear that its purpose was "to convince the world that baptism is of no value unless administered with the express understanding, on the part of both administrator and candidate, that it is for the remission of sins, and is administered for that express purpose" (*FF*, Vol. 3, p. 1). From the very first issues it was apparent that McGary was after Lipscomb. He was a tenacious debater that would not let up. He created in Texas what was actually a re-baptism faction, but he soon had all of Texas on his side, and he was soon to convert most of the rest of the South to his position. When Lipscomb died in 1917 there were but a few that followed his position on baptism.

It shows the difference one strong leader can make, for good or ill. The year before the *Firm Foundation* began one of our preachers in Leona, Texas received 27 immersed Methodists and seven Baptists into the Church of Christ, without re-baptism. There were many such reports of Baptists and other immersed people coming into the Movement in the "Texas Department" of the *Gospel Advocate.* It had always been the practice, as it was in Tennessee and throughout the Movement's history. But the sheriff in Texas started a feud that finally changed all that. He and others, such as J. D. Tant, moved among the churches agitating this issue, and there thus began a massive wave of re-baptisms, including many who had been members of the Church of Christ for a lifetime. Making sure that one was baptized right became a lively issue. A new breed of legalism had been born. The churches became more exclusivistic. Baptists were no longer brothers who needed to be helped out of their sectarianism, but outsiders who had to be immersed like any other sinner. Even more, they sort of became the enemy, and there was soon a flurry of debates with Baptists. Our men even began to debate each other over the issue.

From his powerful editor's desk in Nashville, Lipscomb deplored what he called "the fratricide in Texas." He made one last effort, pointing out to McGary that if his position were right that even Alexander Campbell could not be called a brother. But that was no problem to McGary, who was ready to exclude Campbell as well as anyone else, if his baptism did not measure up to his interpretation of Acts 2:38.

Well, Texas won the feud (who else!) and exclusivism became more than a threat. The same spirit that McGary infused into the *Firm Foundation* holds sway over most Texas Churches of Christ today, who could not, if they were consistent, enjoy fellowship with either David Lipscomb or Alexander Campbell. Exclusivism is like the amoeba that separates into other cells, and those into still more. Since McGary's time Church of Christ exclusivism has generated a new "loyal church" every decade.

In our next we will enlarge our view of how the Churches of Christ became recognized as a distinct religious body in the 1906 Federal Census. —*the Editor*

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DOWN HOME *with CARL*

My next two books are in the production process and will be off the press in a very few months. One will bear the title *Talks to Jews and Non-Jews* and will contain some of my messages to a Jewish Forum together with my answers to questions proposed to me. The last half of the book will be devoted to an analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews. The other book will be *The Twisted Scriptures,* and will be a revised edition of my former volume under that name. It will deal with the tragic misuse of the sacred scriptures to justify our carnal strife and division. We are not yet sure of the selling price of the books but we would like to receive advance orders for them to be billed at the time of delivery. If you are on our permanent list for my books as they come from the press you will receive them automatically with invoice enclosed … We still have copies of *One in Christ,* the last bound issue of "Mission Messenger." The cost is only $3.50 for this attractive clothbound volume … Nell and I will send a free copy of my book *The Death of the Custodian,* to any college student in the world who sends a personal request and furnishes us the name of the school where he is enrolled. We mailed 289 free copies of this book in one month … Do not forget the three-night fellowship forum in which I will be speaking at Sunset Ridge Church of Christ, 2367 Brees Boulevard, San Antonio, Texas 78209, January 12-14. There will be daytime sessions in which I will field questions on the subject from the audience. You may write to Foy F. Osborne at the address given, or call him at 824-4568 … I will be at Minnesota Bible College, Rochester, Minnesota, speaking at their Mid-Winter Conference, February 2-4; and at Pacific Christian College, Fullerton, California, for the Alumni Lectureship, February 16-18 … March 2-4 will find me speaking on fellowship at Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas I will remain over for a discussion at Renewal House, 4519 McKinney Avenue, Dallas, Texas. If you would like a program or further

information write to Dr. David R. Reagan at that address. The zip code is 75203. The telephone is (214) 521-7620 … I was greatly blessed by the meeting in Austin, Minnesota, where I spoke three nights about our relationship in the Christian home. In Colorado Springs, Colorado, I spoke for three nights on the body life of the saints, and we had rewarding sessions. . . On October 15 I became the first male speaker to be invited to address a Women's Convention at Saint Louis Christian College, with more than 800 sisters in Christ present for the occasion. I must mention in closing that I am scheduled to speak at Emmanuel School of Religion, Milligan College, Tennessee, on March 30, 31. It will be a real pleasure to be again associated with the president, Fred Thompson, whom I knew when he was attending the University of Chicago. —*W. Carl Ketcherside, 139 Signal Hill Drive, Saint Louis, Missouri 63121.*

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OFFICE NOTES

It is our plan to increase the size of this journal to at least 24 pages per month for 1977, except for July and August. This will give us an extra 40 pages for the year, which is equivalent to two extra 20-page issues. At the end of the year they will all be bound in a single volume of at least 240 pages. We plan to follow the new theme of *Principles of Unity and Fellowship.* October 1977 will be a special issue since it will be in celebration of our 25th anniversary in publishing *Bible Talk-Restoration Review.*

The extra four pages each month will give us a little more room to do more things. Ketcherside's *Pilgrimage of Joy* will not only continue, but it will be an extra page longer each month. The part of his life that Carl will be telling next year will be most appropriate for the theme we are following.

Our new subscription rates for 1977 will be 3.00 per year or 5.00 for two years. We will still offer the club rate for those who elect to share the journal with others for 1.50 per name in clubs of five or more. For 240 pages of reading, 3.00 is still very low, but we are going to try to hold it at that price, at least through 1977. Those paid in advance will not of course be affected by the new rates.

At the end of this year we will proceed to put all of 1975-76 issues of *Restoration Review* into a bound volume, entitled *The Word Abused.* In size and format it will match the other seven bound volumes we have issued. If you have ordered this, it will be sent to you with invoice enclosed when it is ready. If you would like to have this bound volume,

we urge you to place your order now, for already our advance orders have been more than ever before. Bound volumes for 1967, 1968, 1970 are still available at 3.50. Double volumes for 1971-72 and 1973-74 are 4.50 and 4.95.

Edward Lewis, 7410 Raleigh St., Westminster, CO 80030 has prepared a helpful booklet on *True Christianity* that you would do well to read and then pass on to someone else. He is asking only mailing expenses, which is 40 cents, first-class. It stresses the spiritual life of the believer. He says he wrote it because of Calvary.

If you have any of the first seven volumes of *Mission Messenger,* please contact Stan McDaniel, Johnson Bible College, Knoxville 37920, who needs them for research. Once he is through with them, he will deposit them with our historical society in Nashville to be used in perpetuity.

With Christmas approaching you might want a copy of the *Children's Living Bible* for a child in your life. Many sharp, colorful pictures, a handsome volume, boxed and wrapped in cellophane. The price has recently increased, but we still have them at the old price of 6.45.

We will send you 18 assorted back issues of this paper, dating back to the 1960's for only 3.00. We recommend these to our new readers, so that they can get a feel of what we've been saying through the years.

Some of our popular paperbacks: Schaeffer's *The Mark of the Christian* (1.25) and *The God Who is There* (3.50); Shirley Boone's *One Woman's Liberation* (1.75) and Pat Boone's *A New Song* (1.75); Elton Trueblood's *The Yoke of Christ (1.95).*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

In the August 8 issue of *Christian Standard,* there were articles by three men of non-instrument Church of Christ background, that particular point being unintentional, I'm sure. Do you know of a "Church of Christ" publication that shows that kind of openness? Our papers are more likely to have one more writeup on "Christian Church Preacher Converted" than they are articles by our brothers across the backyard fence, which is more often than not plied with barbed wire. Well, I say bully for the *Standard.* Maybe our folk will catch the point someday and look at what a brother writes rather than at what party he hails from. One of the articles, by the way, was on the joys of fasting, by my friend Neil

Gallagher, who ministers to the Church of Christ in East Providence, R.I. Says Neil, who writes brilliantly on what fasting every Monday has meant to him, “Fasting makes me acutely aware that my body is a divinely provided building, a home for God’s Spirit. It teaches me to be a good manager of this body. I don’t own it, I just manage it.”

The All-Canada Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples) passed a resolution recently to the effect that they should explore and study ways to reestablish lines of communication with other heirs of the Restoration Movement. Some of our Canadian brethren are thrilled over the implications of this resolution and see it as an important breakthrough Some leading American Disciples were at the convention and witnessed the overwhelming vote in favor of the move. We hope that what happened in Canada will make its way southward, causing us all to be more conscious of the meaning of our heritage. Now, really, does it make sense to compass sea and land in search of union with some denomination and then be indifferent toward unity and fellowship with those of the same historic background?

In a recent interview, Don Finto of the Belmont Church of Christ in Nashville, said: “To have an open fellowship and worship you must allow people to make mistakes before the congregation and to say things that you don’t agree with or say things that you wish they hadn’t said. But they have the freedom to say it and we still love them.”

Charismatics in Christian Churches -Churches of Christ are having an annual conference in Oklahoma City, Dec. 1-4 at the Hilton Inn West. Contact Alex Bills at405-677-0134for information.

John Allen Chalk, onetime preacher for Herald of Truth and now an attorney in Abilene, recently spoke on a Bicentennial program at First Baptist Church, Abilene.

James L. Merrill, editor of *The Disciple* (Disciples of Christ), wrote of the problem faced by “mainline churches” in reference to repressive measures taken against various sects by the government and others (such as crackdown on tax exemption). He sees a need to distinguish between such legitimate though misguided sects like Jehovah’s Witnesses and fanatical sects like Rev. Moon’s Unification Church. “The rise of cults challenges those of us in the historic denominations to do a more effective job in teaching. Every congregation should provide its people with the biblical and theological foundations that will enable them to recognize gross heresies,” he says.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

In Lincoln Country is beautiful. How wonderful to read abou t Herman and Thelma Sims. I finished the story through teary eyes, and that at General Motors on the assembly line. *—David Kester, Rt. 1, Rio Vista, TX 76093*

(Now you know why your Chevrolet or Pontiac has that lemon in it. They're reading *Restoration Review* on the job! In a recent open house at that huge assembly plant, I spent some time watching a lad read several pages of a paperback novel between his assignment of attaching a door panel to each passing car. So, why not *Restoration Review*?)

I enjoyed *In Lincoln Country.* Your comment that Lincoln Christian College "generally shows a broader view than most of its sister Bible colleges," reminded me that one of her sister colleges, Nebraska Christian, had Carl Ketcherside for its annual convention in both 1963 and 1967. It has also brought in other men, like Andrew Blackwood, from outside the Restoration Movement. *—Harold Fox, Box 452, Sutton, NB 68979*

We rejoice with you in His grace and forgiveness to a very proud people. I especially enjoyed your article on Brother Barton Stone. Somehow I feel I would be more comfortable with him if he were still living than with A. Campbell. Praise God, to know that both kinds of men are in my spiritual heritage. Keep up the good work *—Bob Cannon, 1111 Ashworth Rd., Des Moines 50265*

Your efforts toward unity among Churches of Christ and Christian Churches over pettiness of ideas are bearing fruit. We need to fellowship freely with our brothers in Christ. God bless your work. *—Douglas and Mary Kelsey, 1138 Ranch Santa Fe Rd., San Marcos, CA 92069*

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